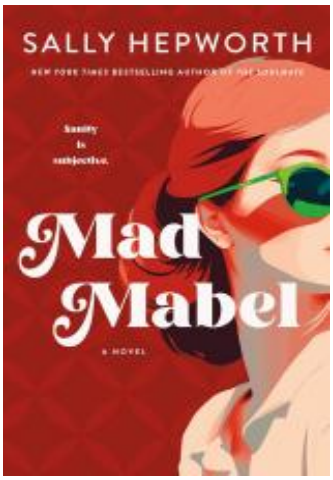
Mad Mabel

by Sally Hepworth



About the Book

From *New York Times* bestselling author Sally Hepworth comes a twisty tale of justice, redemption, and one irrepressible woman who?s not done breaking the rules just yet.

Meet Elsie Mabel Fitzpatrick: 81 years old, gloriously grumpy, fiercely independent, and never without a hot cup of tea --- or a cutting remark. She minds her own business in her quiet Melbourne suburb, until a neighbor turns up dead and the whispers start flying.

Because Elsie hasn?t always been Elsie. Once upon a headline, she was Mad Mabel Waller --- Australia?s youngest convicted murderer. But was she really mad, or just misunderstood? Either way, she?s kept her secret buried for decades.

Enter seven-year-old Persephone, a relentless little chatterbox who has just moved in across the road (armed with stickers, questions, and no sense of personal boundaries); Joan, who appears to have it in for Elsie; and a healthy dose of public interest --- the cops are sniffing around, and the media is circling like seagulls at a picnic.

So Mabel does what she?s always done best --- she takes matters into her own hands.

Is she a cantankerous old lady with a shady past? A cold-blooded killer with arthritis? Or just someone who?s finally ready to tell her side of the story?

Sharp, surprising and wickedly funny, this is the unforgettable story of a woman who has spent a lifetime being underestimated --- and is about to prove everyone wrong. Again.

Discussion Guide

1. Elsie?s voice is sharp and witty, but deeply personal. How did her unique voice shape your experience of the story? Did you find her likable? Did her voice make you trust her more or question what she might be leaving out?

2. The novel opens with the line, ?[T]here are two groups of people who are rarely, if ever, suspected of murder....? How does this statement frame your expectations for the story? In what ways does the book play with assumptions about age, gender and guilt?

3. Friendship between women, especially in old age, is at the heart of this book. What makes Elsie and Daphne?s bond so powerful? How does their relationship challenge or affirm your ideas about lifelong friendship?

4. The character of Persephone brings both levity and chaos. What role does she play in Elsie?s world, and how does their unlikely dynamic evolve throughout the story?

5. How does the novel use humor to address serious themes like trauma, loneliness, aging and regret? Did the humor ever feel like a shield, or did it enhance the emotional weight of the story?

6. Elsie?s past unfolds slowly, revealing tragedy, cruelty and buried secrets. How did the flashbacks shape your understanding of who she is today? Were you surprised by any of the revelations?

7. Joan plays the part of antagonist, her motivations rooted in suspicion and fear. Do you think she is justified in her actions? How would you have reacted in her shoes?

8. Much of the book explores how labels like ?mad? or ?difficult? follow women through life. How has Elsie internalized or rejected these labels? How does society treat ?difficult? women differently across generations?

9. The residents of Kenny Lane are quirky, nosy and tightly interconnected. How does the neighborhood function as both a refuge and a battleground for Elsie?

10. The novel calls itself ?a love story,? not romantic, but a story about platonic love. Do you agree with that description? What does the book suggest about the role of non-romantic relationships in a meaningful life?

Author Bio

Sally Hepworth is the *New York Times* bestselling author of 10 novels, most recently MAD MABEL. Sally?s novels have been called ?darkly charming? and praised by au

Sally's novels have sold millions of copies worldwide and been translated into over 30 languages.

Sally lives in Melbourne, Australia, with her family.

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